

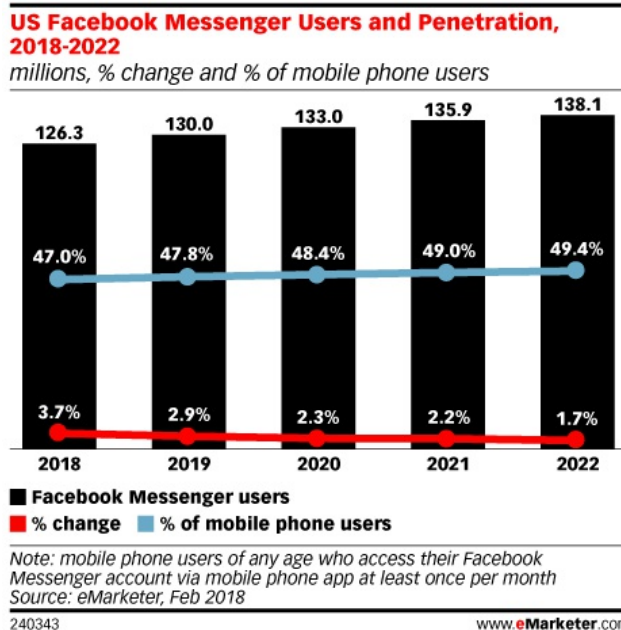
Facebook Messenger Ads: Are They Worth It?

Messenger display ads get eyeballs, but can also be disruptive to users

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Rahul Chadha

Facebook Messenger is the undisputed champion of messaging apps in the US. We estimate that there will be 126.3 million users of the messaging app in 2018. Facebook Messenger will hold onto its lead over other messaging apps over the forecast period, with an expected 138.1 million users by 2022.



According to a survey of US smartphone users conducted by Vibes in March 2018, more respondents were interested in using Facebook Messenger to engage with a brand than any other messaging platform.

Facebook Messenger offers marketers a significant audience, a development that hasn't been lost on its parent company. In January 2017, the company began testing display ads on the Messenger home screen in Australia and Thailand. Since then, the ads have been rolled out globally.

eMarketer's latest report, "Messaging Apps and Marketing 2018: Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and RCS Help Brands Connect," examines the marketing potential of mobile messaging apps like Facebook Messenger in the US, as well as some significant changes to texting that loom on the horizon.

Ad impressions on Facebook Messenger still trail those on Facebook and Instagram by a substantial margin, a reflection of the fact that it remains early days for ads on the platform. A tally of ad impressions from Barclays found a total of 7 billion occurred on Facebook Messenger in 2017. That was far behind both Facebook (15.670 trillion) and Instagram (611 billion).

Facebook Metrics Worldwide, by Property, 2017

	Facebook	Instagram	Facebook Messenger	WhatsApp	Total
Daily active users (DAU) (millions)	1,353	419	1,000	1,353	-
DAU sessions	15	10	20	50	-
Total sessions (billions)	7,408	1,528	7,300	24,692	40,927
Content per session	14	10	1	1	4
Total content (billions)	103,707	15,275	7,300	24,692	150,974
Ad load	15.1%	4.0%	0.1%	0.0%	10.8%
Total impressions (billions)	15,670	611	7	0	16,288
CPM	\$2.31	\$6.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$2.45
Ad revenues (billions)	\$36.1	\$3.7	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$39.8

Source: Barclays, "State of Global Internet," Jan 4, 2018

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Barclay's data also revealed that Facebook Messenger ads were more expensive than those on Facebook's News Feed at a cost per thousand

(CPM) rate of \$3.00. But they were half the price of ads on Instagram.

Facebook is also experimenting with new types of ad formats, such as autoplay video ads, in Messenger. But brands should exercise caution in buying advertising on a platform that's fundamentally different than any other in its level of intimacy, according to experts.

"Messenger ads can be very interruptive and a little bit invasive. The analogy I would suggest is that a display ad on Facebook's Feed is like advertising on the radio. But a display ad on Messenger is like advertising in the middle of a phone call. Advertisers need to recognize that and respect it," said Liz Cole, vice president and group director of social strategy at agency Digitas.

Facebook, for its part, has said it plans on prioritizing a solid user experience over saturating Messenger with ads. "With regards to ads in Messenger, it's been a pretty thoughtful and gradual rollout. We recognize that messaging is different than the Feed," said Ted Helwick, director of product management at Messenger.

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Behind the Numbers

eMarketer analyst Rahul Chadha discusses how consumers feel about communicating with companies via mobile messaging. He goes on to explain what users like and dislike about the medium, the different mobile messaging leaders, what their ad offerings look like and what the future of messaging might look like.